

4(j), 201, and 303(r) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. 152, 154(i)–4(j), 201, 303(r), this NPRM is adopted.

18. The Commission's Consumer Information Bureau, Reference Information Center, shall send a copy of this NPRM, including the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration.

Federal Communications Commission.

William F. Caton,

Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. 02–903 Filed 1–14–02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6712–02–P

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

47 CFR Part 51

[CC Docket No. 01–338, CC Docket No. 96–98, CC Docket No. 98–147, FCC 01–361]

Review of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers; Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Deployment of Wireline Services Offering Advanced Telecommunications Capability

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This document seeks comment on whether the Commission should adopt a more granular approach to its unbundling analysis under section 251 of the Communications Act of 1934 (the Act) and on the identification of specific unbundling requirements for incumbent local exchange carriers (LECs). In particular, the Commission seeks comment on whether it should consider application of its unbundling requirements on the basis of service, geographic, facility, customer or other factors. In addition, the Commission seeks comment on whether to retain, modify or eliminate its existing definitions and requirements for network elements. The Commission also seeks comment on the role of state commissions and whether to retain or modify the existing triennial review process for examination of its unbundling requirements.

DATES: Comments are due March 18, 2002 and Reply Comments are due April 30, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeremy Miller, Attorney Advisor, Policy and Program Planning Division,

Common Carrier Bureau, telephone (202) 418–1580.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in CC Docket No. 01–338, FCC 01–361, adopted December 12, 2001, and released December 20, 2001. The complete text of this NPRM is available for inspection and copying during normal business hours in the FCC Reference Information Center, Portals II, 445 12th Street, SW., Room CY–A257, Washington, DC 20554. This document may also be purchased from the Commission's duplicating contractor, Qualex International, Portals II, 445 12th Street, SW., Room CY–B402, Washington, DC 20554, telephone (202) 863–2893, facsimile (202) 863–2898, or via email qualexint@aol.com. It is also available on the Commission's website at <http://www.fcc.gov>.

Synopsis of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

1. Background. In the Third Local Competition Report and Order, (65 FR 19334, April 11, 2000) the Commission stated that it would reexamine its network element unbundling requirements every three years. In addition, the Commission intends to address a number of outstanding issues concerning the unbundling obligations of incumbent LECs raised by parties in the last several years.

2. The Commission seeks comment on how it should apply section 251(d)(2). In particular, the Commission seeks comment on how to align more directly its unbundling requirements with the multiple stated goals of the Act, such as the directive to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability. The Commission also seeks comment on whether and how to apply a more granular approach to its existing unbundling analysis by incorporating such refinements as considering for each network element the specific service to be provided, the geographic location, the facility to be unbundled, or the customer to be served. The Commission also seeks comment on what triggers might be adopted to limit or sunset unbundling requirements over time.

3. The Commission seeks comment on its existing rules for network elements. The Commission seeks comment on how to apply a more refined unbundling analysis to its existing unbundling requirements and whether it should retain, modify or eliminate any of these requirements. In addition, the Commission seeks comment on parties' practical experience with the current

unbundling requirements. The Commission also seeks comment on a number of general issues including (1) application of the "just, reasonable and nondiscriminatory" standard of section 251(c)(3); (2) the relationship between services as governed by sections 251(c)(4) and 251(b)(1) and network elements as governed by sections 251(d)(2) and 251(c)(3); (3) the Commission's existing co-mingling restrictions; (4) the Commission's safe harbor provisions for "significant local usage;" (5) the relationship between section 271(c)(2)(B) and sections 251(d)(2) and 251(c)(3); (6) the applicability of sections 201, 202 or other sections of the Act to incumbent LEC wholesale services in the absence of a section 251 unbundling obligation; and (7) clarification of the term "superior" as used in the now invalidated rule 47 CFR 51.311(c).

4. State Role. The Commission seeks comment on the role of states in adoption and implementation of unbundling requirements. Among other alternatives, the Commission offers for comment a proposal to adopt national standards for unbundling that would leave specific implementation to the states.

5. Procedural Issues. The Commission seeks comment on whether to retain or modify the existing triennial review process for the examination of its unbundling requirements. The Commission also seeks comment on the use of a sunset period for unbundling obligations and whether it needs to consider transitional mechanisms to address the potential financial impact that would be created by changes to unbundling obligations.

I. Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

6. As required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), as amended, the Commission has prepared this Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) of the possible significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities by the policies and rules proposed in this document. Written public comments are requested on this IRFA. Comments must be identified as responses to the IRFA and must be filed by the deadlines for comments on the document provided above. The Commission will send a copy of the document, including this IRFA, to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration (SBA). In addition, this document will be published in the **Federal Register**.

II. Need for, and Objectives of, the Proposed Rules

7. In the Third Local Competition Report and Order, the Commission stated that it would reexamine its network element requirements within a three-year period. In this document, the Commission seeks comment on its unbundling analysis under sections 251(d)(2) and 251(c)(3) and whether it should retain, modify or eliminate any of the current unbundling requirements for network elements. Moreover, the Commission seeks comment on the role of the states and whether, in the future, it should retain a triennial review process.

III. Legal Basis

8. The legal basis for any action that may be taken pursuant to this document is contained in sections 1–4, 157, 201–05, 251, 252, 254, 256, 271, 303(r), and 332 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. 151–54, 157, 201–05, 251, 252, 254, 256, 271, 303(r), and 332.

IV. Description and Estimate of the Number of Small Entities To Which the Proposed Rules Will Apply

9. The RFA directs agencies to provide a description of and, where feasible, an estimate of the number of small entities that will be affected by the proposed rules. The RFA generally defines the term “small entity” as having the same meaning as the terms “small business,” “small organization,” and “small governmental jurisdiction.” In addition, the term “small business” has the same meaning as the term “small business concern” under the Small Business Act. A small business concern is one which: (1) is independently owned and operated; (2) is not dominant in its field of operation; and (3) satisfies any additional criteria established by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

10. In this section, the Commission further describes and estimates the number of small entity licensees and regulatees that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM. The most reliable source of information regarding the total numbers of certain common carrier and related providers nationwide, as well as the number of commercial wireless entities, appears to be the data that the Commission publishes in its *Trends in Telephone Service* report. In a news release, the Commission indicated that there are 4,822 interstate carriers. These carriers include, *inter alia*, local exchange carriers, wireline carriers and service providers, interexchange carriers,

competitive access providers, operator service providers, pay telephone operators, providers of telephone service, providers of telephone exchange service, and resellers.

11. The SBA has defined establishments engaged in providing “Radiotelephone Communications” and “Telephone Communications, Except Radiotelephone” to be small businesses when they have no more than 1,500 employees. Below, we discuss the total estimated number of telephone companies falling within the two categories, and the number of small businesses in each. The Commission then attempts to further refine those estimates to correspond with the categories of telephone companies that are commonly used under our rules.

12. The Commission has included small incumbent LECs in this present RFA analysis. As noted above, a “small business” under the RFA is one that, *inter alia*, meets the pertinent small business size standard (e.g., a telephone communications business having 1,500 or fewer employees), and “is not dominant in its field of operation.” The SBA’s Office of Advocacy contends that, for RFA purposes, small incumbent LECs are not dominant in their field of operation because any such dominance is not “national” in scope. The Commission has therefore included small incumbent LECs in this RFA analysis, although it emphasizes that this RFA action has no effect on Commission analyses and determinations in other, non-RFA contexts.

13. *Total Number of Telephone Companies Affected.* The U.S. Bureau of the Census (“Census Bureau”) reports that, at the end of 1992, there were 3,497 firms engaged in providing telephone services, as defined therein, for at least one year. This number contains a variety of different categories of carriers, including local exchange carriers, interexchange carriers, competitive access providers, cellular carriers, mobile service carriers, operator service providers, pay telephone operators, covered specialized mobile radio providers, and resellers. It seems certain that some of these 3,497 telephone service firms may not qualify as small entities because they are not “independently owned and operated.” For example, a PCS provider that is affiliated with an interexchange carrier having more than 1,500 employees would not meet the definition of a small business. It is reasonable to conclude that fewer than 3,497 telephone service firms are small entity telephone service firms that may be affected by the new rules.

14. *Wireline Carriers and Service Providers.* The SBA has developed a definition of small entities for telephone communications companies except radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. The Census Bureau reports that there were 2,321 such telephone companies in operation for at least one year at the end of 1992. According to the SBA’s definition, a small business telephone company other than a radiotelephone company is one employing no more than 1,500 persons. All but 26 of the 2,321 non-radiotelephone companies listed by the Census Bureau were reported to have fewer than 1,000 employees. Thus, even if all 26 of those companies had more than 1,500 employees, there would still be 2,295 non-radiotelephone companies that might qualify as small entities. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated, and thus are unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of wireline carriers and service providers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA’s definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates 2,295 or fewer small telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone companies are small entities that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

15. *Local Exchange Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition for small providers of local exchange services. The closest applicable definition under the SBA rules is for telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Telecommunications Industry Revenue* data, 1,335 incumbent carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of local exchange services. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are either dominant in their field of operations, are not independently owned and operated, or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of LECs that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA’s definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that 1,335 or fewer providers of local exchange service are small entities or small incumbent LECs that may be affected by the new rules.

16. *Interexchange Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to providers of interexchange services (IXCs). The

closest applicable definition under the SBA rules is for telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Trends in Telephone Service* data, 204 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of interexchange services. We do not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus are unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of IXCs that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, we estimate that there are 204 or fewer small-entity IXCs that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

17. *Competitive Access Providers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to competitive access services providers (CAPs). The closest applicable definition under the SBA rules is for telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Trends in Telephone Service* data, 349 CAP/CLEC carriers and 60 other LECs reported that they were engaged in the provision of competitive local exchange services. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated, or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus are unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of CAPs that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, we estimate that there are 349 or fewer small-entity CAPs and 60 or fewer other LECs that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

18. *Operator Service Providers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to providers of operator services. The closest applicable definition under the SBA rules is for telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Trends in Telephone Service* data, 21 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of operator services. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of operator service

providers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are 21 or fewer small-entity operator service providers that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

19. *Pay Telephone Operators.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to pay telephone operators. The closest applicable definition under SBA rules is for telephone communications companies other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Trends in Telephone Service* data, 758 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of pay telephone services. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of pay telephone operators that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are 758 or fewer small-entity pay telephone operators that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

20. *Resellers (including debit card providers).* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to resellers. The closest applicable SBA definition for a reseller is a telephone communications company other than radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. According to the most recent *Trends in Telephone Service* data, 454 toll and 87 local entities reported that they were engaged in the resale of telephone service. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of resellers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are 454 or fewer small-toll-entity resellers and 87 or fewer small-local-entity resellers that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

21. *Toll-Free 800 and 800-Like Service Subscribers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to 800 and 800-like service ("toll free") subscribers. The most reliable source of information regarding the number of

these service subscribers appears to be data the Commission collects on the 800, 888, and 877 numbers in use. According to the Commission's most recent data, at the end of January 1999, the number of 800 numbers assigned was 7,692,955; the number of 888 numbers that had been assigned was 7,706,393; and the number of 877 numbers assigned was 1,946,538. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these subscribers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of toll free subscribers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are 7,692,955 or fewer small-entity 800 subscribers, 7,706,393 or fewer small-entity 888 subscribers, and 1,946,538 or fewer small-entity 877 subscribers that may be affected by rules adopted pursuant to this NPRM.

22. *Cellular Licensees.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities applicable to cellular licensees. Therefore, the applicable definition of small entity is the definition under the SBA rules applicable to radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies. This definition provides that a small entity is a radiotelephone company employing no more than 1,500 persons. According to the Bureau of the Census, only 12 radiotelephone firms out of a total of 1,178 such firms that operated during 1992 had 1,000 or more employees. Therefore, even if all 12 of these firms were cellular telephone companies, nearly all cellular carriers were small businesses under the SBA's definition. In addition, the Commission notes that there are 1,758 cellular licenses; however, it does not know the number of cellular licensees, since a cellular licensee may own several licenses. The most reliable source of information regarding the number of cellular service providers nationwide appears to be data the Commission publishes annually in its *Telecommunications Industry Revenue* report, regarding the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). The report places cellular licensees and Personal Communications Service (PCS) licensees in one group. According to recent data, 808 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of either cellular or PCS services. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than

1,500 employees, and thus it is unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of cellular service carriers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are no more than 808 small cellular service carriers.

23. *220 MHz Radio Service—Phase I Licensees.* The 220 MHz service has both Phase I and Phase II licenses. Phase I licensing was conducted by lotteries in 1992 and 1993. There are approximately 1,515 such non-nationwide licensees and 4 nationwide licensees currently authorized to operate in the 220 MHz band. The Commission has not developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to such incumbent 220 MHz Phase I licensees. To estimate the number of such licensees that are small businesses, the Commission applies the definition under the SBA rules applicable to radiotelephone communications companies. This definition provides that a small entity is a radiotelephone company employing no more than 1,500 persons. According to a 1995 estimate by the Bureau of the Census, only 12 radiotelephone firms out of a total of 1,178 such firms that operated during 1992 had 1,000 or more employees. Therefore, assuming that this general ratio has not changed significantly in recent years in the context of Phase I 220 MHz licensees, we estimate that nearly all such licensees are small businesses under the SBA's definition.

24. *220 MHz Radio Service—Phase II Licensees.* The Phase II 220 MHz service is a new service, and is subject to spectrum auctions. In the *220 MHz Third Report and Order* (63 FR 2976, January 20, 1998), the Commission adopted criteria for defining small businesses and very small businesses for purposes of determining their eligibility for special provisions such as bidding credits and installment payments. The Commission has defined a small business as an entity that, together with its affiliates and controlling principals, has average gross revenues not exceeding \$15 million for the preceding three years. Additionally, a very small business is defined as an entity that, together with its affiliates and controlling principals, has average gross revenues that are not more than \$3 million for the preceding three years. The SBA has approved these definitions. An auction of Phase II licenses commenced on September 15, 1998, and closed on October 22, 1998. Nine hundred and eight (908) licenses were auctioned in three different-sized geographic areas: 3 nationwide licenses,

30 Regional Economic Area Group (REAG) licenses, and 875 Economic Area (EA) licenses. Of the 908 licenses auctioned, 693 were sold. Companies claiming small business status won: 1 of the Nationwide licenses, 67% of the Regional licenses, 47% of the REAG licenses and 54% of the EA licenses. As of January 22, 1999, the Commission announced that it was prepared to grant 654 of the Phase II licenses won at auction. A second 220 MHz Radio Service auction began on June 8, 1999 and closed on June 30, 1999. This auction offered 225 licenses in 87 EAs and 4 REAGs. (A total of 9 REAG licenses and 216 EA licenses. No nationwide licenses were available in this auction.) Of the 215 EA licenses won, 153 EA licenses (71%) were won by bidders claiming small business status. Of the 7 REAG licenses won, 5 REAG licenses (71%) were won by bidders claiming small business status.

25. *Private and Common Carrier Paging.* The Commission has adopted a two-tier definition of small businesses in the context of auctioning licenses in the Common Carrier Paging and exclusive Private Carrier Paging services. A small business will be defined as either: (1) An entity that, together with its affiliates and controlling principals, has average gross revenues for the three preceding years of not more than \$3 million; or (2) an entity that, together with affiliates and controlling principals, has average gross revenues for the three preceding calendar years of not more than \$15 million. Because the SBA has not yet approved this definition for paging services, we will utilize the SBA's definition applicable to radiotelephone companies, *i.e.*, an entity employing no more than 1,500 persons. At present, there are approximately 24,000 Private Paging licenses and 74,000 Common Carrier Paging licenses. According to recent data, 172 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of either paging or "other mobile" services, which are placed together in the data. The Commission does not have data specifying the number of these carriers that are not independently owned and operated or have more than 1,500 employees, and thus are unable at this time to estimate with greater precision the number of paging carriers that would qualify as small business concerns under the SBA's definition. Consequently, we estimate that there are no more than 172 small paging carriers. We estimate that the majority of private and common carrier paging providers would qualify as small entities under the SBA definition.

26. *Mobile Service Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a definition of small entities specifically applicable to mobile service carriers, such as paging companies. As noted above in the section concerning paging service carriers, the closest applicable definition under the SBA rules is that for radiotelephone (*i.e.*, wireless) companies, and recent data show that 172 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of either paging or "other mobile" services. Consequently, the Commission estimates that there are no more than 172 small mobile service carriers.

27. *Broadband Personal Communications Service (PCS).* The broadband PCS spectrum is divided into six frequency blocks designated A through F, and the Commission has held auctions for each block. The Commission defined "small entity" for blocks C and F as an entity that has average gross revenues of less than \$40 million in the three previous calendar years. For block F, an additional classification for "very small business" was added and is defined as an entity that, together with affiliates, has average gross revenues of not more than \$15 million for the preceding three calendar years. These regulations defining "small entity" in the context of broadband PCS auctions have been approved by the SBA. No small businesses within the SBA-approved definition bid successfully for licenses in blocks A and B. There were 90 winning bidders that qualified as small entities in the C block auctions. A total of 93 small and very small business bidders won approximately 40% of the 1,479 licenses for blocks D, E and F. On March 23, 1999, the Commission held another auction (Auction No. 22) of C, D, E and F block licenses for PCS spectrum returned to the Commission by previous license holders. In that auction, 48 bidders claiming small business, very small business or entrepreneurial status won 272 of the 341 licenses (80%) offered. Based on this information, we conclude that the number of small broadband PCS licensees includes the 90 winning C block bidders, the 93 qualifying bidders in the D, E and F blocks, and the 48 winning bidders from Auction No. 22, for a total of 231 small-entity PCS providers as defined by the SBA and the Commission's auction rules.

28. *Narrowband PCS.* The Commission has auctioned nationwide and regional licenses for narrowband PCS. There are 11 nationwide and 30 regional licensees for narrowband PCS. The Commission does not have sufficient information to determine

whether any of these licensees are small businesses within the SBA-approved definition for radiotelephone companies. At present, there have been no auctions held for the major trading area (MTA) and basic trading area (BTA) narrowband PCS licenses. The Commission anticipates a total of 561 MTA licenses and 2,958 BTA licenses will be awarded by auction. Such auctions, however, have not yet been scheduled. Given that nearly all radiotelephone companies have no more than 1,500 employees, and no reliable estimate of the number of prospective MTA and BTA narrowband licensees can be made, we assume, for our purposes here, that all of the licenses will be awarded to small entities, as that term is defined by the SBA.

29. *Rural Radiotelephone Service.* The Commission has not adopted a definition of small entity specific to the Rural Radiotelephone Service. A significant subset of the Rural Radiotelephone Service is the Basic Exchange Telephone Radio Systems (BETRS). The Commission will use the SBA's definition applicable to radiotelephone companies, *i.e.*, an entity employing no more than 1,500 persons. There are approximately 1,000 licensees in the Rural Radiotelephone Service, and we estimate that almost all of them qualify as small entities under the SBA's definition.

30. *Air-Ground Radiotelephone Service.* The Commission has not adopted a definition of small entity specific to the Air-Ground Radiotelephone Service. Accordingly, we will use the SBA's definition applicable to radiotelephone companies, *i.e.*, an entity employing no more than 1,500 persons. There are approximately 100 licensees in the Air-Ground Radiotelephone Service, and the Commission estimates that almost all of them qualify as small under the SBA definition.

31. *Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR).* The Commission awards bidding credits in auctions for geographic area 800 MHz and 900 MHz SMR licenses to two tiers of firms: (1) "Small entities," those with revenues of no more than \$15 million in each of the three previous calendar years; and (2) "very small entities," those with revenues of no more than \$3 million in each of the three previous calendar years. The regulations defining "small entity" and "very small entity" in the context of 800 MHz SMR (upper 10 MHz and lower 230 channels) and 900 MHz SMR have been approved by the SBA. The Commission does not know how many firms provide 800 MHz or 900 MHz geographic area SMR service pursuant to extended

implementation authorizations, nor how many of these providers have annual revenues of no more than \$15 million. One firm has over \$15 million in revenues. The Commission assumes, for its purposes here, that all of the remaining existing extended implementation authorizations are held by small entities, as that term is defined by the SBA. The Commission has held auctions for geographic area licenses in the 800 MHz (upper 10 MHz) and 900 MHz SMR bands. There were 60 winning bidders that qualified as small and very small entities in the 900 MHz auction. Of the 1,020 licenses won in the 900 MHz auction, 263 licenses were won by bidders qualifying as small and very small entities. In the 800 MHz SMR auction, 38 of the 524 licenses won were won by small and very small entities.

32. *Marine Coast Service.* Between December 3, 1998 and December 14, 1998, the Commission held an auction of 42 VHF Public Coast licenses in the 157.1875–157.4500 MHz (ship transmit) and 161.775–162.0125 MHz (coast transmit) bands. For purposes of this auction, and for future public coast auctions, the Commission defines a "small" business as an entity that, together with controlling interests and affiliates, has average gross revenues for the preceding three years not to exceed \$15 million dollars. A "very small" business is one that, together with controlling interests and affiliates, has average gross revenues for the preceding three years not to exceed \$3 million dollars. There are approximately 10,672 licensees in the Marine Coast Service, and the Commission estimates that almost all of them qualify as "small" businesses under the Commission's definition, which has been approved by the SBA.

33. *Fixed Microwave Services.* Microwave services include common carrier, private-operational fixed, and broadcast auxiliary radio services. At present, there are approximately 22,015 common carrier fixed licensees and 61,670 private operational-fixed licensees and broadcast auxiliary radio licensees in the microwave services. The Commission has not yet defined a small business with respect to microwave services. For the Commission's purposes here, it will utilize the SBA's definition applicable to radiotelephone companies' *i.e.*, an entity with no more than 1,500 persons. Under this definition, the Commission estimates that all of the Fixed Microwave licensees (excluding broadcast auxiliary licensees) would qualify as small entities.

34. *Local Multipoint Distribution Service.* The Commission held two

auctions for licenses in the Local Multipoint Distribution Services (LMDS) (Auction No. 17 and Auction No. 23). For both of these auctions, the Commission defined a small business as an entity, together with its affiliates and controlling principals, having average gross revenues for the three preceding years of not more than \$40 million. A very small business was defined as an entity, together with affiliates and controlling principals, having average gross revenues for the three preceding years of not more than \$15 million. Of the 144 winning bidders in Auction Nos. 17 and 23, 125 bidders (87%) were small or very small businesses.

35. *24 GHz—Incumbent 24 GHz Licensees.* The rules that the Commission may later adopt could affect incumbent licensees who were relocated to the 24 GHz band from the 18 GHz band, and applicants who wish to provide services in the 24 GHz band. The Commission has not developed a definition of small entities applicable to licensees in the 24 GHz band. Therefore, the applicable definition of small entity is the definition under the SBA rules for the radiotelephone industry, providing that a small entity is a radiotelephone company employing fewer than 1,500 persons. The 1992 Census of Transportation, Communications and Utilities, conducted by the Bureau of the Census, which is the most recent information available, shows that only 12 radiotelephone firms out of a total of 1,178 such firms that operated during 1992 had 1,000 or more employees. This information notwithstanding, the Commission believes that there are only two licensees in the 24 GHz band that were relocated from the 18 GHz band, Teligent and TRW, Inc. Both Teligent and TRW, Inc. appear to have more than 1,500 employees. Therefore, it appears that no incumbent licensee in the 24 GHz band is a small business entity.

36. *Future 24 GHz Licensees.* The rules that the Commission may later adopt could also affect potential new licensees on the 24 GHz band. Pursuant to 47 CFR 24.720(b), the Commission has defined "small business" for Blocks C and F broadband PCS licensees as firms that had average gross revenues of less than \$40 million in the three previous calendar years. This regulation defining "small business" in the context of broadband PCS auctions has been approved by the SBA. With respect to new applicants in the 24 GHz band, we shall use this definition of "small business" and apply it to the 24 GHz band under the name "entrepreneur." With regard to "small business," we shall adopt the definition of "very small business" used for 39 GHz licenses and

PCS C and F block licenses: businesses with average annual gross revenues for the three preceding years not in excess of \$15 million. Finally, "very small business" in the 24 GHz band shall be defined as an entity with average gross revenues not to exceed \$3 million for the preceding three years. The Commission will not know how many licensees will be small or very small businesses until the auction, if required, is held. Even after that, the Commission will not know how many licensees will partition their license areas or disaggregate their spectrum blocks, if partitioning and disaggregation are allowed.

37. *39 GHz*. The Commission held an auction (Auction No. 30) for fixed point-to-point microwave licenses in the 38.6 to 40.0 GHz band (39 GHz Band). For this auction, the Commission defined a small business as an entity, together with affiliates and controlling interests, having average gross revenues for the three preceding years of not more than \$40 million. A very small business was defined as an entity, together with affiliates and controlling principals, having average gross revenues for the three preceding years of not more than \$15 million. The SBA has approved these definitions. Of the 29 winning bidders in Auction No. 30, 18 bidders (62%) were small business participants.

38. *Multipoint Distribution Service (MDS)*. This service involves a variety of transmitters, which are used to relay data and programming to the home or office, similar to that provided by cable television systems. In connection with the 1996 MDS auction, the Commission defined small businesses as entities that had annual average gross revenues for the three preceding years not in excess of \$40 million. This definition of a small entity in the context of MDS auctions has been approved by the SBA. These stations were licensed prior to implementation of Section 309(j) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended. Licenses for new MDS facilities are now awarded to auction winners in Basic Trading Areas (BTAs) and BTA-like areas. The MDS auctions resulted in 67 successful bidders obtaining licensing opportunities for 493 BTAs. Of the 67 auction winners, 61 meet the definition of a small business.

39. MDS is also heavily encumbered with licensees of stations authorized prior to the MDS auction. SBA has developed a definition of small entities for pay television services, which includes all such companies generating \$11 million or less in annual receipts. This definition includes MDS systems, and thus applies to incumbent MDS licensees and wireless cable operators

which may not have participated or been successful in the MDS auction. Information available to us indicates that there are 832 of these licensees and operators that do not generate revenue in excess of \$11 million annually. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis, the Commission finds there are approximately 892 small MDS providers as defined by the SBA and the Commission's auction rules.

40. *Offshore Radiotelephone Service*. This service operates on several UHF TV broadcast channels that are not used for TV broadcasting in the coastal area of the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. At present, there are approximately 55 licensees in this service. The Commission is unable at this time to estimate the number of licensees that would qualify as small under the SBA's definition for radiotelephone communications.

41. *Wireless Communications Services (WCS)*. This service can be used for fixed, mobile, radio-location and digital audio broadcasting satellite uses. The Commission defined "small business" for the WCS auction as an entity with average gross revenues of \$40 million for each of the three preceding years, and a "very small business" as an entity with average gross revenues of \$15 million for each of the three preceding years. The Commission auctioned geographic area licenses in the WCS service. In the auction, there were seven winning bidders that qualified as very small business entities, and one winning bidder that qualified as a small business entity. We conclude that the number of geographic area WCS licensees affected includes these eight entities.

42. *General Wireless Communication Service (GWCS)*. This service was created by the Commission on July 31, 1995 by transferring 25 MHz of spectrum in the 4660–4685 MHz band from the federal government to private sector use. The Commission sought and obtained SBA approval of a refined definition of "small business" for GWCS in this band. According to this definition, a small business is any entity, together with its affiliates and entities holding controlling interests in the entity, that has average annual gross revenues over the three preceding years that are not more than \$40 million. By letter dated March 30, 1999, NTIA reclaimed the spectrum allocated to GWCS and identified alternative spectrum at 4940–4990 MHz. On February 23, 2000, the Commission released its *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (65 FR 14230) in WT Docket No. 00–32 proposing to allocate

and establish licensing and service rules for the 4.9 GHz band.

V. Description of Projected Reporting, Recordkeeping and Other Compliance Requirements

43. In this NPRM, we seek comment on crafting unbundling rules that promote the goals of the Act and on a more granular approach to unbundling. In addition, the Commission asks for comment on how to involve the experience and expertise of state commissions. As a result, our unbundling regulations may require incumbent LECs to unbundle their networks by facility, service, or geography, rather than on a national basis for an entire element as they currently do. However, to identify which factors advancing the goals of the Act are relevant to an unbundling analysis, the Commission asks about the weight to assign to reducing regulatory obligations as alternatives to the incumbent's network becomes available, and whether the unbundling obligations are administratively practical.

VI. Steps Taken To Minimize Significant Economic Impact on Small Entities, and Significant Alternatives Considered

44. The RFA requires an agency to describe any significant small business, alternatives that it has considered in reaching its proposed approach, which may include the following four alternatives (among others): (1) The establishment of differing compliance or reporting requirements or timetables that take into account the resources available to small entities; (2) the clarification, consolidation, or simplification of compliance or reporting requirements under the rule for small entities; (3) the use of performance, rather than design, standards; and (4) an exemption from coverage of the rule, or any part thereof, for small entities.

45. In this NPRM, we seek comment on refining our unbundling rules by examining whether we should consider the type of customer that a requesting carrier seeks to serve. In particular, the Commission asks whether the availability of UNEs should differ on the basis of whether the requesting carrier serves business or residential customers, and whether to have different rules for facilities serving larger business customers. The Commission asks questions in considerable depth with regard to the carve-out for the residential market for local switching, and seek comment on the practical experience of the carve-out has worked in practice and whether a substantially

revised approach is warranted. The size of the entity as a subscriber to telecommunications services is therefore an important component of our unbundling analysis.

46. In addition to examining the economic impact on customers, the Commission also examines the economic impact on carriers. It especially seeks comment from small entities on these issues. As the Commission considers undertaking a more granular approach, it recognizes that the resulting rules could be more administratively burdensome on carriers because it would be more difficult to keep track of where and under what circumstances certain elements must be

unbundled. Accordingly, the Commission asks for comment about balancing any administrative burden against the benefits of a refined approach to unbundling. Particularly with regard to definitions of different network elements, the Commission asks whether there are less burdensome alternatives available to achieve the goals of the Act.

VII. Federal Rules that May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict With the Proposed Rules

47. None.

Ordering Clauses

48. Pursuant to the authority contained in sections 1-4, 157, 201-05,

251, 252, 254, 256, 271, 303(r), and 332 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. 151-54, 157, 201-05, 251, 252, 254, 256, 271, 303(r), and 332, this NPRM *is adopted*.

49. The Commission's Consumer Information Bureau, Reference Information Center, *Shall send* a copy of this document, including the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration.

Federal Communications Commission.

William F. Caton,

Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. 02-902 Filed 1-14-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6712-02-P